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INFO RUWDHDP/OBLA LOS ANGELES CA PRIORITY
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RHMFIASS/HQ USSOCOM CMD CTR MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAHLC/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFIASS/NAVINTELOFC GUANTANAMO BAY CU PRIORITY
RUESDM/JTLO MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RHMFIASS/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFIASS/COGARD INTELCOORDCEN WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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S E C R E T HAVANA 000172

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/17/2029
TAGS: SNAR PREL SMIG PGOV CU ASEC
SUBJECT: CUBAN MININT'S THOUGHTS ON TRAVEL, LAW
ENFORCEMENT, AND INTEL SHARING

Classified By: com jonathan farrar for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (S) Summary: On 9 March 2009, the United States Coast Guard Drug Interdiction Specialist (DIS) stationed at the United States Interests Section in Havana, Cuba (USINT) attended a routine working meeting with Cuban Ministry of Interior (MININT) officers, including one Cuban Border Guard Colonel (COL) and two officers from the MININT Directorate of International Relations (one Lieutenant Colonel (LTCOL) and a Major (MAJ)). All three officers are regular DIS contacts with whom he has met approximately thirty times since the DIS's arrival in country in August 2008, including two multi-day law enforcement-related excursions. Topics discussed on 9 March included a recent marijuana wash-up in Holguin Province, and suspected migrant smugglers currently being detained by the Government of Cuba (GOC).

¶2. (S) On 9 March, the DIS received four requests for information from MININT. Of note was a request on forty-five subjects suspected of being involved in organized Cuban migrant smuggling and currently being detained in Cuba, and a recent marijuana wash-up on Cuba's north coast in Holguin Province. Following the working portion of the meeting, the DIS was asked by the MININT MAJ whether he believed the proposed legislation in the U.S. congress that would permit Cuban Americans to travel to Cuba more frequently would pass. Attempting to gauge the current readiness level of the Cuban economy for increased tourism, DIS in-turn asked the officers whether Cuba was ready for an increased flow of American tourists, to which the COL responded that Cuba was never averse to Americans traveling to Cuba; rather, it was a policy initiated and brought on by the United States, not Cuba. The meeting ended a few moments later, and the DIS departed the MININT protocol house.

¶3. (S) After departing, DIS, LTCOL, and MAJ initiated a side-bar conversation and the DIS once again asked (and clarified his earlier travel-related question) whether or not Cuba was prepared for a significant influx of American tourists should policy permit such a change. The MAJ was quick to respond in the negative and pointed out that Cuban airports were not prepared to accommodate a large influx. The LTCOL stated that should maritime ports be utilized for ferries or cruises, they too are not prepared or equipped to handle an increase in passengers and the logistics that

accompany them. Both agreed that this will require a significant amount of time to rectify. While the LTCOL appeared optimistic that this issue was one that would be improved, the MAJ was visibly frustrated with the issue; he stated that Cuba has previously prepared for an increased flow of Americans only to have the United States government turn around and prohibit travel to the island.

¶ 14. (S) DIS told both officers that an increase in American travel to Cuba would bring about a litany of issues, including matters that will have to be handled by USINT's American Citizen Services section as well as Cuban and US law enforcement agencies. DIS stated that the GOC may have to work more closely with such agencies as the Drug Enforcement Administration, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Marshals Service, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Immediately following this statement, the MAJ stated, in an agreeable fashion, that the GOC will also have to work with the Central Intelligence Agency on matters related to terrorism.

¶ 15. (S) DIS used this line of conversation as a segue to float the idea of greater USINT Regional Security Officer (RSO) involvement in law enforcement issues as opposed to the DIS handling nearly all exchanges. Both MININT officers were amenable to the idea and stated that they are willing to work with the current USINT RSO on law enforcement-related matters. The MAJ stated that increased law enforcement cooperation outside the bounds of the existing MININT-DIS relationship will inevitably push both sides into a position where they are forced to work together on mutually-concerning issues, thereby opening the door to other forms of collaboration.

¶ 16. (S) DIS asked what it would take to setup a meeting among MININT, DIS, and RSO, and the MAJ stated that a diplomatic note should be sent to the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations (MINREX) to request said meeting. The side-bar concluded after approximately thirty minutes.

¶ 17. (S) Comment: MININT and MINREX (during Cuban migrant repatriations) continue to bombard the DIS with statements encouraging the United States to cooperate on matters related to law enforcement, specifically counternarcotics and illegal migration. Most, if not all, migrant repatriations bring the DIS into direct contact with an official from MINREX's North American Division. MINREX officers inevitably raise the need for greater dialogue between the United States and Cuba, and seem to believe that counternarcotics and migration issues are a viable, potential conduit for increased U.S.-Cuba collaboration. DIS believes this continued LE cooperation message from the GOC to the DIS is part of a concerted effort to increase dialogue with the United States via an already established working-level relationship.

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